

FILE COPY

SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE 59th ANNUAL CONFERENCE
held at
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQUARE, W.C.1, FRIDAY, SATURDAY & SUNDAY,
12th, 13th and 14th APRIL, 1963

CONFERENCE SESSIONS:

First day.....	11.20 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.
Second day.....	2.30 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.
Third day.....	11.20 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.

Attendances during Conference:

	<u>Delegates present</u>	<u>Branches represented</u>
First day	32	14
Second day	28	16
Third day	28	16

Branches not represented:

First day	Swansea, Birmingham, Glasgow & West Ham
Second day	Swansea & Dartford
Third day	Swansea & Dartford

Branches not represented throughout Conference - Swansea.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

<u>Expenditure</u>		<u>Income</u>
	<u>£ s. d.</u>	<u>£ s. d.</u>
Conway Hall	57. 15. 0	Collection Fri. 13. 4. 10
Caretaker	5. 0. 0	do. Sat. 8.10. 3
Band	17. 0. 0	do. Rally 6. 3. 6
Raffle Exxs.	4. 7. 6	Catering 13. 0. 0
Delegates' Exxs.	2. 0. 0	Social 30.13. 3
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£86. 2. 6		£71.11..10
	Debit Balance	14.10. 8
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		£86. 2. 6

FRIDAY SESSION

At 11.20 a.m. the assembled Delegates were called to order and they agreed to elect Coms. Ambridge and Phillips as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively.

It was agreed that the Standing Orders Committee act as Tellers.

The Chairman proposed to deal with Resolutions and Items of Discussion in conjunction with the relevant parts of the E.C.'s Report to Conference. The Delegates agreed to this procedure.

Report of the 59th E.C. to Conference.

1960-9

1. E.C. Meetings during year } No discussion
2. E.C. Attendances do.

3. Branches, Membership and Organisation

Central Branch Secretary's Report. Bloomsbury Branch criticised the form in which this report had been embodied into the E.C.'s Report to Conference complete with the Secretary's signature and an invitation to Central Branch members. The Chairman assured the speaker that the E.C. took full responsibility for the work carried out by all officers and sub-committees appointed by the E.C. The signature of the Central Branch Secretary, as that of other officers, had been included by mistake.

RESOLUTION No.1. Paddington Branch: "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to arrange for the 1964 Delegate Meeting to be held in the Provinces".

CARRIED 14 - 12

There was a very limited amount of discussion. Some members thought this was a good idea but that we were not yet ready for such a venture in view of the additional expense involved. Others thought that after 60 years it was time to break away from our usual arrangements. Delegate Meetings had been poorly attended in the past and a change might stimulate greater interest. A Delegate Meeting in the Provinces would lend itself to a concentrated propaganda drive by the whole membership present, once the business of the Delegate Meeting had been dealt with and such an arrangement would create enthusiasm. Also a larger number of Provincial Delegates might find it easier to attend a Provincial centre than come to London.

Item for Discussion D. Camberwell Branch: "Methods of improving Party propaganda, the responsibility and organisation". There was some discussion on Rule Books. Some Delegates stressed the importance of up-to-date Rule Books. One Delegate thought that it might be better to keep the Rules separate from Due Stamps.

NO ACTION

Item for Discussion B. Islington Branch. "The possibility of appointing a full-time Propagandist-Organiser". Islington Branch thought that the time had come to appoint such an official. A large majority of the working class had not yet heard of us. Most members were already doing what they could and the only way to spread our activity effectively would be by the appointment of a full-time propagandist-organiser. Other Delegates thought that it would be a good idea but we could not afford such an appointment. One Delegate made the point that in his opinion it would be difficult to find a member with a sufficiently high standard of knowledge.

NO ACTION

Item for Discussion E. Islington Branch. "Ways and Means of increasing the sales of the 'Socialist Standard'".

Floor Resolution (Doherty & Corry), Islington. "That this Conference recommends that publicity should be completely overhauled and that a third of the Party's income be earmarked for advertising the S.S. with a view to increasing S.S. subscriptions".

Amendment (May & Cox, Paddington) "Delete all after overhauled".

CARRIED 19 - 0

as Sub.Res. do. 19 - 0

The movers of the resolution and those speaking in favour of it stated that the S.S. was now our most important means of propaganda. Given the necessary money the Party could double the number of subscriptions. Each subscriber meant a sale of at least 3 S.S. Those speaking in favour of the amendment expressed the view that increased sales could only be obtained by integrating all forms of propaganda. There was no short cut to a substantial increase in the sales of the S.S. Advertisements were very useful when all other forms of propaganda were exploited to the full. More numerous Meetings, canvassing, Special Issues with meetings linked up with

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them, sales drives to be supported by centrally organised publicity. But this publicity would have to be in keeping with our income. Some Delegates suggested that the question of block advertising should be studied, every effort made to increase the number of newsagents carrying the S.S., all large meetings or functions of other organisations should be covered and the 25/- a week spent by the Publicity Committee should be stepped up to £2 or £3 a week. A substantial increase in activities would bring us the money to engage in advertising on a more ambitious scale.

Printing Committee. The next item in the E.C.'s Report to be taken up by the Delegates was the work of this Committee. Bloomsbury Branch expressed their appreciation of the work done, the rest of the Delegates echoing this sentiment.

Party Funds Organiser. In answer to a question from a Delegate, the Treasurer said that owing to the work done by the Funds Organiser a deficit had been converted into a reasonable balance. He had managed to raise £380 in the first three months. Paddington Branch congratulated the Funds Organiser for obtaining a guaranteed income of £1,000 a year. This would allow the Party to plan its activities well ahead. Other Delegates expressed their agreement with Paddington Branch.

World Socialist Party of Ireland. The Chairman then raised the request received by the 60th E.C. from the W.S.P. of I. for inclusion of that Party's name in the official sub-heading of the Socialist Standard. The request had been received after the Conference Agenda had been despatched to Branches, but the E.C. thought that the membership should be consulted before arrangements were finalised. The Delegates heard the letter from Com. Murray in which he expressed the Irish Comrades' wish to see the S.S. published as a joint journal of both Parties, the present Socialist Standard Production Committee to retain control and articles on the Irish scene to be supplied by the W.S.P.I. The Delegates also heard the S.S. Production Committee's report on the matter.

Floor Resolution (Ross & Zucconi, Lewisham) "that this Conference is in favour of a journal of the S.P.G.B. and W.S.P.I."

Amendment (Cox & Wilson, Paddington) "that this Conference is in favour of the request by the W.S.P. of I. that the S.S. become a joint journal of the S.P.G.B. and W.S.P.I. within the terms set out in their request and the S.S. Production Committee's comments, as presented to this Conference".

CARRIED 29 - 0

as Sub. Res. do. 29 - 0

W.S.P. of U.S. The Chairman also raised the question of a request received by the E.C. from the W.S.P. of U.S. for a uniform Application for Membership Form. He read the Questionnaire which the American Parties use and which they would like to be adopted by the S.P.G.B.

Floor Resolution (Cox, Paddington & Coffey, Lewisham) "That this Conference is of the opinion that the draft Application Form for Membership which the W.S.P. has submitted is not entirely suitable for all purposes and is in some ways too stereotyped as a questionnaire. We would therefore ask the W.S.P. of U.S.A. to await our further consideration of this important matter with a view to eventually drawing up a universally acceptable form".

Amendment (Devereux & Karsley, Bloomsbury) "that this Conference does not favour a combined Application Form and Questionnaire on the Party's case, but, not having had sufficient opportunity to study the document submitted closely enough to give a final opinion, refers the matter to the E.C. to deal with and suggest that the E.C. can always return the issue to the membership if they feel they require detailed guidance".

LOST 5 - 17

2nd Amendment (Wilson, Dartford & Bourne, S.E. Essex). "that this Conference is of the opinion that a decision on the Application Form as submitted by the W.S.P. of U.S.A. be deferred until Branches have considered the issues involved".

CARRIED 23 - 0

Greetings from Companion Parties.

1180

At this juncture the Chairman read messages received from the W.S.P. of I, the Melbourne Branch of the S.P. of Australia, Comrades Gloss and Rab on behalf of the W.S.P. of U.S. and the Boston Local and last but not least Comrade Frank. The latter sent a very detailed statement on the Austrian political scene. Full copies were made available to the Delegates. For the first time in many years the American comrades were unable to send a taped message owing to pressure of Party work, but they had sent a recording of the first radio programme sponsored and paid for by any Socialist Party. In view of its length it could not be heard during actual Conference proceedings but Delegates were informed that it would be played at H.O. that very evening during the course of a social.

Resolution (Cox, Paddington & Shaw, Nottingham) "that the letters be acknowledged and the Companion Parties be thanked for their messages".

AGREED

E.C. Report, Item (g) 3.

Companion Parties - Declaration of Principles. The Chairman told Conference that a further communication had been received from the W.S.P. of U.S. Their membership would like to see Clauses 7 and 8 re-worded. They particularly disliked the expressions "to wage war" and "hostile", and they would like Conference to consider the question. The Referendum which the American Parties had held had turned down the proposed re-wording but they thought that a change should be made. The Delegates expressed the view that Conference could not make any suggestions at this stage and a Party Poll would be necessary. Branches had not discussed all the implications and the matter would have to be considered in great detail.

Floor Resolution (Cox, Paddington & Corry, Islington) "that the E.C. be asked to circularise all Branches with an up-to-date position concerning the proposed alterations of the D. of P. by the W.S.P. of U.S. with a view to the matter being brought up again at the next Delegate Meeting or the next Annual Conference".

Amendment (E. & R. Critchfield, Wembley) "Delete the words Delegate Meeting".

CARRIED 18 - 7

Address by Com. McGuinness. This Comrade who had visited most Branches of the Companion Parties gave an account of his impressions. The general state of the Companion Parties is good. They have guts and endurance. In some places comrades are discontented with their efforts, but they are determined to carry on and to work within their resources. They would welcome any help we can give them. Activities in Canada and the U.S. are vital and very impressive. Australia has found the tape recordings most helpful. They use them for social gatherings and discussions but they are disappointed that they cannot hold debates and meetings in the way we can. We are not keeping closely enough in touch with them.

Conference adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

SATURDAY SESSION commenced at 2.30 p.m.

Overseas Contacts Secretary.

Resolution (E. Goodman & Gilcs, Paddington) "that this Conference recommends that the Overseas Contacts Secretary be allocated an annual sum for advertising in overseas journals".

CARRIED 9 - 0

The Overseas Contacts Secretary mentioned that she would like to tell Conference that Com. Frank in Vienna has great hopes of forming a group there in the near future. He is in contact with a number of people who are sympathetic to our cause, although they have a long way to go yet. They publish a paper, "The Free Word", which has quite a circulation and they have published an article by Com. Frank. He would like to see the group publicised in the S.S.

Amendments
Bills 1.
Amend.

Amendments to Rules

Rule 1. Ealing Branch "Delete the word 'Annually' in line one, second para. and insert 'Bi-annually'".

Amendment: Lewisham Branch "Delete 'bi-annually' and insert 'tri-annually'".

Ealing Branch Amendment do. 15-18

LOST 18-18

Rule 2. Camberwell Branch "Delete '6d' in line one, second para. and insert '9d'" LOST 14-24

Ealing Branch "Delete '6d' in line one, second para. and insert '1/-'". LOST 13-26

Rule 9. Ealing Branch "Delete '4d' in line 2 and insert '8d'". LOST 4-36

Amendment Camberwell Branch "Delete '8d' and insert '7d'". LOST 4-34

do. Paddington Branch "the amended Rule to read: 'Each Branch shall purchase due stamps from H.O. at the full dues rate per member except those members excused under Rule 2'".

LOST 14-23

do. Wood Green & Hornsey Branch "Delete 'purchase stamps from' and insert 'pay'. The amended amendment to read: 'Each Branch shall pay H.O. the full dues rate per member.....'" LOST 2-33

Rule 25. Camberwell Branch "That Rule 25 be deleted". LOST 4-32

Rule 28. Camberwell Branch "Delete all after 'constituency' in line 4". LOST 3-36

Paddington Branch "At the end of line 4, substitute 'a majority of' in place of 'sufficient' and delete all after 'nomination paper'. The resolution then to read:- 'Elections, National and Local, shall only be contested by the Party putting forward the full number of candidates in the particular Ward, District or Constituency. There must be a majority of fully qualified members in the Ward, District or Constituency to fill in the candidate's Nomination Paper'".

LOST 10-29

Addendum Paddington Branch "The other signatories to be known sympathisers of the Party". The last sentence of the Resolution would then read, 'There must be a majority of fully qualified members in the Ward, District or Constituency to fill in the candidate's Nomination Paper; the other signatories to be known sympathisers of the Party'".

LOST 15-26

(The Addenda and Amendments to Amendments to Rules were in all cases taken before the Amendments to Rules. The setting out in this Report was kept in the same order as on the Agenda for easier reference).

Floor Resolution (Lawrence & Gillics, Bloomsbury) "That the E.C. be asked to see that the Rule Books are brought up to date at least every third year".

Amendment (M.Critchfield, Wembley & Gerr, Islington) "Delete 'Third'".

Amendment CARRIED 13-5
as Sub.Res. do. 13-5

The Conference then reverted to the E.C.'s Report.

1960-8
S.S. Production Committee's Report.

There was no comment from the Delegates but a member of the Committee mentioned that the May issue of the S.S. would be a Special Issue on housing. He urged all members to make every effort to sell as many as possible of this number which was the most ambitious published since the Anniversary Number. Orders had already come in from the Provinces, in one case 8 orders from Devon for 40 dozen each.

Pamphlets Committee's Report. A member of the Committee said, in answer to a question, that two-thirds of the new pamphlet on Russia had been written by the end of last year. A lot of changes in the Russian situation had taken place - in particular, the disagreement between China and Russia and it would be necessary for the Committee to await the outcome of this. But the writing of the pamphlet should be finished by the middle of June. Conference was also told that the replacement of the pamphlet on Race would probably be finished by the end of the year.

Publicity Committee. One Delegate suggested that the Party should advertise in the Railway Review which had a considerable readership and had on various occasions published his letters in full.

Parliamentary Committee's Report. (Items J. and K.)

In answer to a question, a member of the Committee said that they were of the opinion that a stereotype statement to the local Press was not a suitable means of propaganda in areas where the Party was not putting up a candidate. But members in Provincial Branches and Central Branch should try to put over the Party's case by following up letters in the correspondence column of newspapers whenever this candidate or that Party was mentioned. More attention would be given to a letter from a local resident than to one from H.Q. On the question of a broadsheet, he told Conference that only three articles had been submitted to them in response to their request. None of them was suitable. They were making arrangements for another letter to go out to Branches asking for articles to be submitted. No decision had been reached as to whether the Party would contest the coming General Election. There was no Constituency in the London area with 10 valid members to sign the Nomination Papers. By April 1964 there would be 10 members in the Bromley area (three members did not qualify for inclusion in the current Electoral Register). If more than one London Constituency was to be contested, it would be advisable to choose areas abounding each other or close together to minimise travelling and generally facilitate the work. Paddington and Bromley would probably afford the Party the maximum publicity. Paddington would be subject to a lot of publicity due to Jimmy Edwards standing there as candidate and we might share some of the limelight. Bromley with MacMillan would be bound to attract a lot of attention. There was a strong Liberal organisation, Labour making an all-out effort to attack MacMillan, a lot of CND-ers and an element of Communists. If Glasgow Branch decided to contest Woodside, it would mean a great amount of work, day and night, for the 20 or so active members there. With regard to finance, we would need about £350 per Constituency. If, as suggested under Item K, we were to contest 3 Constituencies, we would need a minimum of £1,000. This would leave about £200 per Constituency, after paying the deposit. It could be done, but much would depend on the time of the year when the election would take place. If we would have to contest in November a great deal of the money would have to go on hall hire, whereas in kinder weather a large number of our meetings would be held out of doors. Most of the money could then be spent on the Candidates, the Election Special and leaflets. All these would have to be distributed as well and it would mean canvassing four or five weeks, every night - but this should not act as a deterrent. Contesting an Election would give a spur to Party activities. The money would be well spent from the point of view of publicity. He thought that three Constituencies, at least two in London, would be well worth going into.

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Glasgow Branch mentioned that they were going to contest Woodside at the next Municipal Election. Although the Branch had not yet considered any official plans for the General Election, the Delegate thought they were in favour. Glasgow Branch considered that the best way to put over the socialist case was to go round and talk to people. Too much emphasis was placed on hasty television appearances. These could be very misleading, even harmful.

Resolution (Hampson & Curtis, Baling). "In the opinion of this Conference a campaign contesting 2 Constituencies in the London area and, if possible, one Constituency in Glasgow, at the next General Election, would be most advantageous to the Party at present and that the E.C. should therefore be asked to aim at this and make the necessary appeals to the membership without delay".

CARRIED 21-3

Conference adjourned at 5.30 p.m.

SUNDAY SESSION commenced at 11.30 a.m.

Propaganda Committee's Report. In connection with this report a number of delegates expressed themselves in favour of a meeting or a series of meetings at Trafalgar Square as soon as possible. A meeting of this nature would allow us to bring the Party to a large crowd of people who had never heard of us before. After 60 years it was time that we availed ourselves of the opportunity for a mass meeting. All technical difficulties could be overcome once the Party had decided to make an all-out effort to organise such a meeting. A member of the Propaganda Committee said whilst they did not think Trafalgar Square Meetings the best way of using our limited resources, they had tried to carry out the wishes of the membership. After the recent disturbances in the Square it had become more difficult to obtain a booking, but they were persisting in making enquiries at the specified intervals of 3 months. A number of other speakers expressed the view that it would be better to maintain and increase our propaganda stations to cover as large a field as possible instead of concentrating all Party activities on Trafalgar Square on at least one occasion. The value of our propaganda depended on the intimate contact between the speaker and his audience. Questions and answers were an essential part of all our meetings. Trafalgar Square could only be used for the demonstrative type of meeting.

Floor Resolution (Flowers & Hyams, Hackney) "That this Conference is of the opinion that Trafalgar Square meetings should be held without delay".

CARRIED 8-6

Resolution, Paddington Branch (Resolution No. 2 on the Agenda) - "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to make arrangements for regular visits by speakers from London to those Provincial Branches who wish to hold outdoor meetings but have insufficient local speaking strength".

CARRIED 24-1

Items for Discussion C,D & E.

It was agreed to widen the discussion by taking these 3 items together. ("Our propaganda, positive or negative?", "Methods of improving Party propaganda", "How to improve our propaganda in the London area").

There was a brief reference to the necessity of organising our propaganda in the most efficient manner and of encouraging young speakers to speak more frequently. Most of the delegates concentrated on the question of negative or positive propaganda.

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Some of the speakers ~~interpretated~~ the fact that so much time was taken up attacking Capitalism that there was little left to advocate Socialism. People wanted to know what it would be like living under Socialism and we were chary to prophecy. The statement from the platform should be positive, and opposition from the audience should give rise to the exposition of the negative side of our case. Other Delegates thought that the speaker must adapt himself to his listeners. It was mentioned that it was dangerous to try and paint a detailed picture of future society under Socialism. We could only start from the status quo and point to the possibilities in various ways. It was a mistake to pretend that there would be no problems in a Socialist society, but the fundamental change in conditions would allow society to come to grips with them and solve them. One speaker said that there was little wrong with what we said but we would have to say it far more often and to bigger audiences.

Resolution No. 3 (Birmingham Branch) "That this Conference affirms Resolution 12 of the 1957 Conference which reads as follows:

'That this Conference affirms that because of its expanding capacity of wealth production, Capitalism's crises, whether destructive war or non-productive slump, tend always to intensify, involving the wastage of life and wealth on an ever increasing scale'".

In opening the discussion a Delegate from Birmingham Branch stated that the Party refused to face up to reality. Some members thought that crises could be avoided by planning and that Capitalism could go on for ever. In the process of making profits the capitalists were putting their accumulated capital into constant capital, the latter becoming for ever greater in relation to variable capital. This in due course led to an ever-increasing fall in the rate of profit. Then there was a slump and the whole process started all over again. War was an integral part of the capitalist system, and with capital having to fight more and more for a place in production in order to obtain a share in the surplus value, crises and wars were bound to intensify. In order to support his case he quoted passages from Soc.15 of Vol. 3 of Capital. A number of speakers pointed out that crises did not in fact intensify. When Marx and Engels used this term they meant that crises were affecting ever widening areas of the earth's surface. As to the falling rate of profit, this tendency had in fact been reversed during the last 2 years. Another speaker mentioned that slumps did not in fact become worse and worse. America had her worst slump in the 1930s. Since then there had been a number of smaller ones. Wars did not in fact necessarily become intensified. The Napoleonic War cost more lives than the Second World War. More Americans were killed in the Civil War than in the 2 World Wars. Birmingham were asking Conference not only to make a general pronouncement on the next war and the next crisis but to tie both to the expanding capacity of capitalism production. Wars, whilst arising out of Capitalism, could not be pinned down to one factor. The conflict between India and China or between Egypt and Iraq or Saudi Arabia had nothing to do with over-production. There was no crisis from which Capitalism could not recover; it would never collapse and the only thing which could destroy it would be the will of the working class.

The Resolution was then put to the vote: LOST 7-30

Floor Resolution (Doherty & Corrie, Islington) "That this Conference is of the opinion that the question of whether or not capitalist crises or wars get worse or intensified, is beside the point as far as the Party's case is concerned and is relatively unimportant in broad relation to our case against Capitalism as a whole".

LOST 3-9

Films Committee. A member of the Committee explained that they had experienced great difficulty in obtaining a regular supply of films suitable for Party propaganda. Probably only one film a month would be shown next session.

At this juncture a member of the 59th E.C. drew the attention of Conference to the decision of the 60th E.C. to have the leaflets issued by Camberwell Branch and printed by the Printing Committee destroyed. He called the E.C.'s action a criminal act. Since this was not the concern of the 59th E.C. whose work was under revision, Conference moved on to the next item.

Item for Discussion I (Party Finance).

Financial Statement. A member of Wood Green & Hornsey Branch spoke about the precarious position in which the Party had found itself before the appointment of the Funds Organiser. His Branch felt that H.O. was the only real asset the Party possessed. They believed that the Party should get rid of 52, Clapham High Street and get cheaper premises.

The E.C. Report to Conference was then adopted on the motion of Lawrence, Bloomsbury & Doherty, Islington. AGREED

Item N. "The S.P.G.B. and Capitalism" (Central Branch). Shortage of time allowed only for a short statement. The Member of Central Branch expressed his dissatisfaction with the Agenda. He thought we should not copy debating societies but concern ourselves with bringing the socialist case to the working class. We must put forward the basic elements of our case, say the same thing over and over again to as many people as possible.

Item G. "The Continuing Need for Party Education" (Paddington Branch). A Delegate of the Branch made a plea for educational classes. There had been a lack of interest in the last few years but there were a number of new young members who had expressed great interest. The Education Organiser said a new programme was under review. Classes would most likely begin in the Autumn. A summer school may be held.

CONFERENCE ADJOURNED AT 5.30 p.m.

The following Items had not been discussed:-

Items: H. "The Advisability of a Party Summer School in the Provinces or Ireland" (Camberwell).
L. "Violence and Morality" (Paddington)
M. "Are there any signs of Working Class Progress towards Socialism"? (Bloomsbury)

These Items will be carried forward to the Autumn Delegate Meeting.

Correction.

Page 2: Item for Discussion D. should read -

Item for Discussion A. (Camberwell Branch). "The advisability of the whole question of up-to-date Rule Books being gone into by the E.C. Also the possibility of revisions being printed by the Printing Committee".